

1949

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

WASHINGTON

COPY NO. 12

December 20, 1949

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Assessment and Appraisal of U. S. Objectives, Commitments, and Risks in Relation to Military Power

REFERENCE: NSC Action No. 5

The National Security Act of 1947, as amended, specifies that the first duty of the National Security Council, subject to the direction of the President, shall be "to assess and appraise the objectives, commitments and risks of the United States in relation to our actual and potential military power, in the interest of national security, for the purpose of making recommendations to the President in connection therewith."

At its first meeting, the National Security Council directed that the preparation of such a study for consideration by the Council should be a basic responsibility of the Executive Secretary and a permanent assignment to the Council staff, which should utilize for this purpose the advice and assistance of all appropriate departments and agencies of the Government.

Recognizing that such a study could not be undertaken as a single project without a background of approved policies on the specific problems which directly affect our national security, the NSC staff during the two years of its existence has carried out this directive by the preparation of specific recommendations as to current policies regarding the principal areas, countries and subjects that are significant from the viewpoint of national security. Policy coverage of this type, which is largely concerned with the political and economic aspects, has, with a few exceptions, been generally completed. The outstanding project of this nature has been the formulation of "U. S. Objectives with Respect to the USSR to Counter Soviet Threats to U. S. Security" (NSC 20/4), which states not only our general objectives with respect to Russia both in peace or war, but also supplementary aims to achieve those objectives by methods short of war on the one hand or in the event of war on the other.

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These reports prepared by the NSC staff to date, taken in their entirety, are believed to present a very comprehensive set of politico-economic policies in the field of national security. There can be no certainty, however, that such an accumulation of separate policy statements adequately meets the requirements of our national security without an integrated assessment and appraisal, particularly in relation to our actual and potential military power and the manner in which it can best be employed. Such an assessment and appraisal should therefore consider not only our current objectives, commitments and risks, but also indicate what they would be (a) under a continuation of present conditions, or (b) in the event of war in the near future.

By submitting to the President an over-all assessment and appraisal of this type, there can be no question that the National Security Council has performed the first of its statutory duties.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the Council now direct the NSC staff, with the advice and assistance of all appropriate executive departments and agencies, to prepare a report for Council consideration assessing and appraising the objectives, commitments and risks of the United States under a continuation of present conditions or in the event of war in the near future, in relation to our actual and potential military power, in the interest of national security, including any recommendations which should be made to the President in connection therewith.

SIDNEY W. SOUERS
Executive Secretary

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